



[Home](#) > [Articles](#) > Insights into hours worked, September 2020

Insights into hours worked, September 2020

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Source: [Labour Force, Australia, September 2020](#)

On this page

[Hours worked and employment](#)

[Hours worked ranges](#)

[Flows between hours worked categories](#)

[People working fewer hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons](#)

[People working zero hours for economic reasons](#)

Hours worked and employment

Hours worked fell by 9.5% between March and April in seasonally adjusted terms, which was double the fall in employed people (4.7%). After this large fall in April, the decline in hours worked slowed considerably into May, with hours worked decreasing by a further 1.0%.

Between May and June, hours worked began to recover, increasing by 4.2%, alongside a 1.9% increase in employment. In July, hours worked increased by another 1.3%.

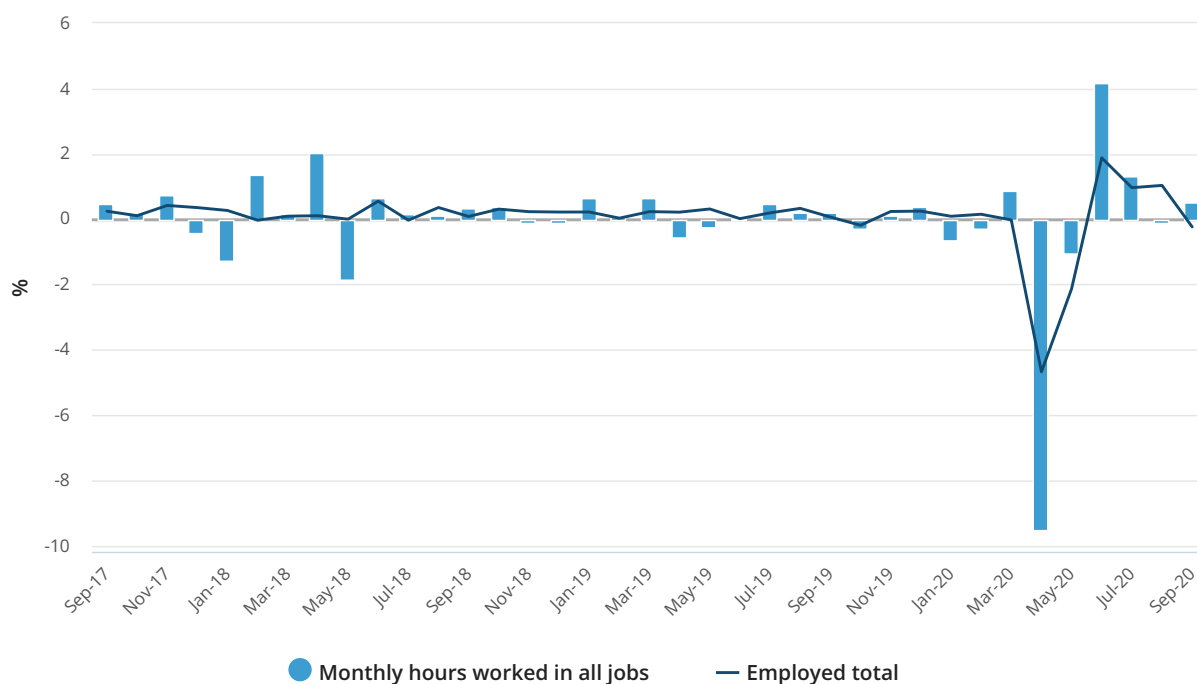
While employment continued to grow strongly in August (up 1.0%), the recovery in hours worked slowed, with a 0.1% decrease recorded. This small decrease reflected a 4.6% decrease in hours worked in Victoria, with all other states and territories recording a combined increase of 1.5%.

In September, hours worked increased by 0.5%, while employment decreased by 0.2%. Victoria again experienced a decrease in hours worked (down 2.1%).

Since the low point in May, total hours worked has increased by 94.9 million hours, recovering more than half (51%) of the 185.5 million hour decrease between March and May. However, hours worked in September were still 5.1% lower than March.

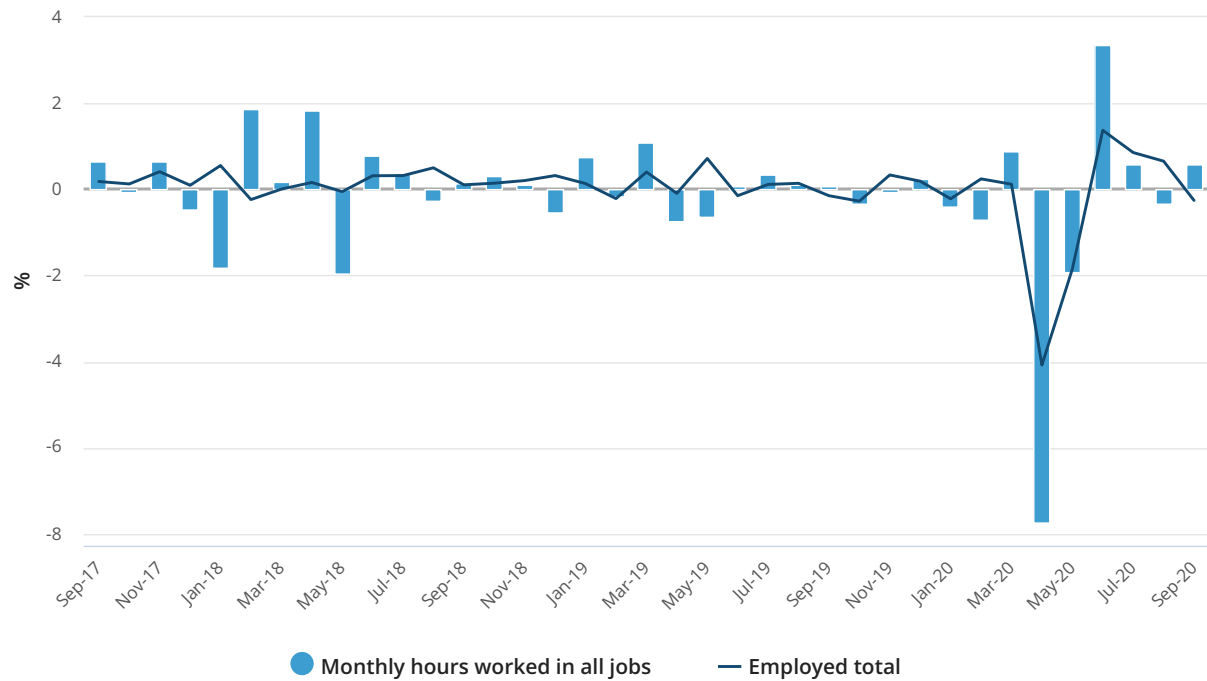
Charts 1, 2 and 3 show the monthly changes in seasonally adjusted hours worked and employment for all people, men and women. Hours worked for women showed stronger growth from May to August, following the much larger fall in female hours early in the COVID-19 period. However, in September, growth in male hours worked was stronger (0.6% compared to 0.4%).

Chart 1: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 3: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted

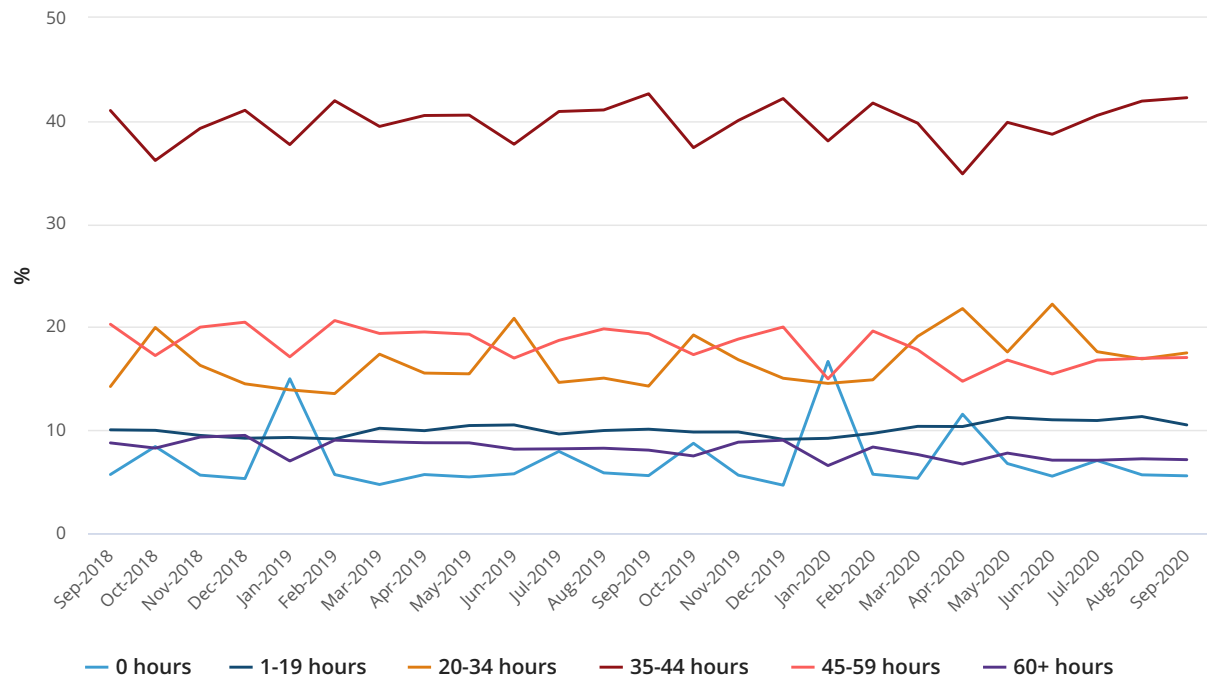


Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Hours worked ranges

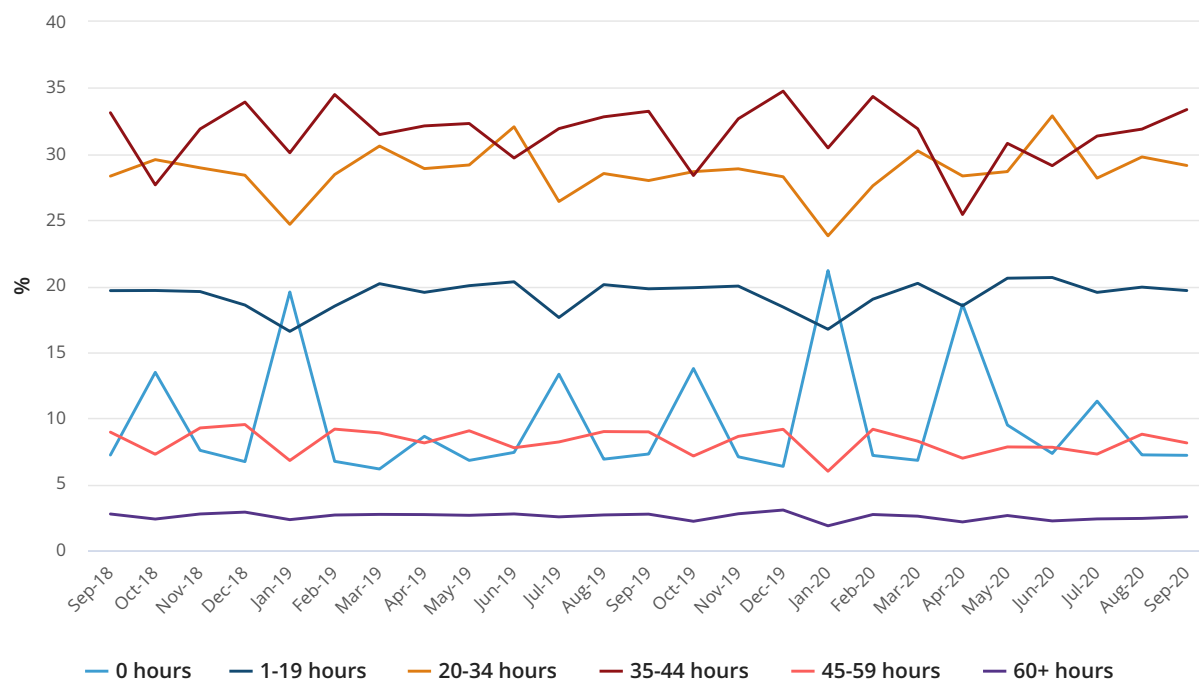
It is also illuminating to examine the number of people working within various hours ranges. Charts 4 and 5 show the distribution of employed men and women across the hours worked categories over the past three years.

Chart 4: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Males, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

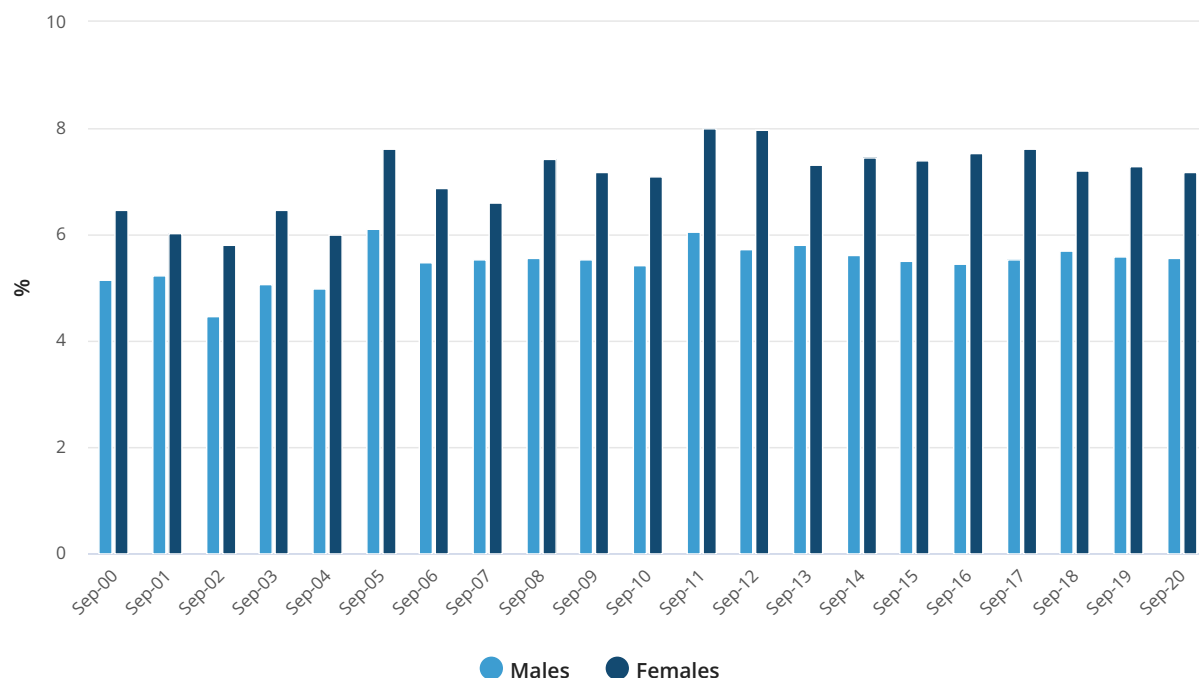
Chart 5: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Females, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows that the proportion of employed men and women who worked zero hours in September 2020 was relatively similar to levels in September of previous years. These year-to-year comparisons were very different to the record highs for men and women that were seen in April and May 2020 (relative to April and May in previous years).

Chart 6: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Flows between hours worked categories

Table 1 shows the proportion of people in each of the hours worked categories in September by their hours worked in August.

Of the employed people who worked zero hours in September, 33% (around 250,000 people) had also worked zero hours in August - indicating that they have been paid for at least some of the past 4 weeks (otherwise they would no longer be classified as employed). This was considerably lower than the 45% recorded between April and May and 40% between May and June, but higher than the 22% between June and July and 29% between July and August.

13% of the employed people who worked zero hours in September were not employed in August (again, indicating that they received some pay despite not working any hours).

There were also over 130,000 people who moved from working zero hours in August to being not employed in September (18% of the employed people who worked zero hours in August). This was a slight increase on recent months (which averaged around 120,000), but lower than between May and June (150,000), and April and May (450,000).

Table 1: Flows between hours worked categories from August to September, Original

		September								
		0 hours	1-19 hours	20-34 hours	35-44 hours	45-59 hours	60+ hours	Not employed*	Total	
August	0 hours	32.5	5.2	3.7	2.5	2.2	2.3	1.7	3.7	
	1-19 hours	14.3	63.7	12.6	2.6	3.2	1.7	1.5	9.8	
	20-34 hours	15.6	14.9	58.3	12.3	5.5	4.4	0.9	13.9	
	35-44 hours	18.0	5.0	18.9	69.9	24.0	10.3	0.8	22.2	
	45-59 hours	4.2	1.6	2.7	9.8	54.9	24.5	0.2	7.6	
	60+ hours	2.9	0.4	0.6	1.2	9.3	54.6	0.1	2.6	
	Not employed*	12.5	9.2	3.2	1.7	0.9	2.3	94.7	40.1	
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Longitudinal Labour Force microdata

*Not employed includes all people who were unemployed or not in the labour force.

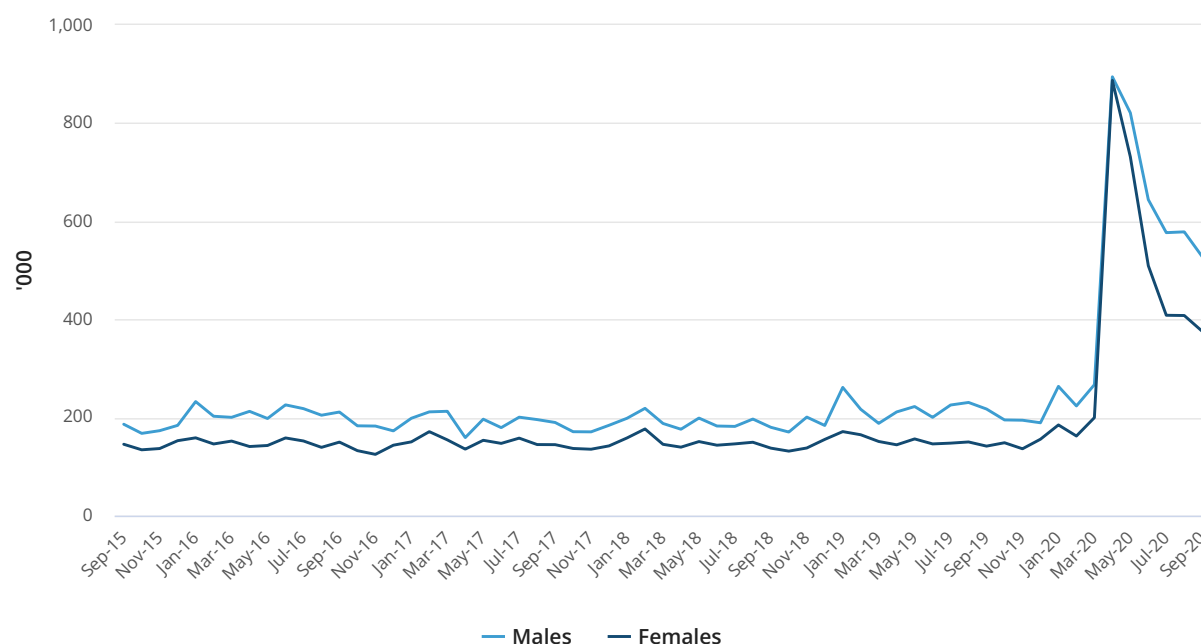
People working fewer hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons

Chart 7 shows the number of men and women working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, for economic reasons over the past 5 years. The number of men and women who worked fewer than their usual hours (or no hours at all) for economic reasons had a similar peak in April (at around 900,000 for both), however, the subsequent reductions have been much greater for women (a fall of over 500,000 since April, compared to around 360,000 for men).

Overall, there were around 900,000 people who worked fewer than their usual hours for economic reasons in September 2020, a decrease of almost 900,000 since April 2020 (when it was around 1.8 million people). This comprised:

- 400,000 'underemployed full-time workers' (i.e. full-time who worked less than 35 hours in the reference week);
- around 115,000 full-time workers who worked less than their usual hours in the reference week but still worked 35 hours or more; and
- around 385,000 part-time workers.

Chart 7: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, for



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

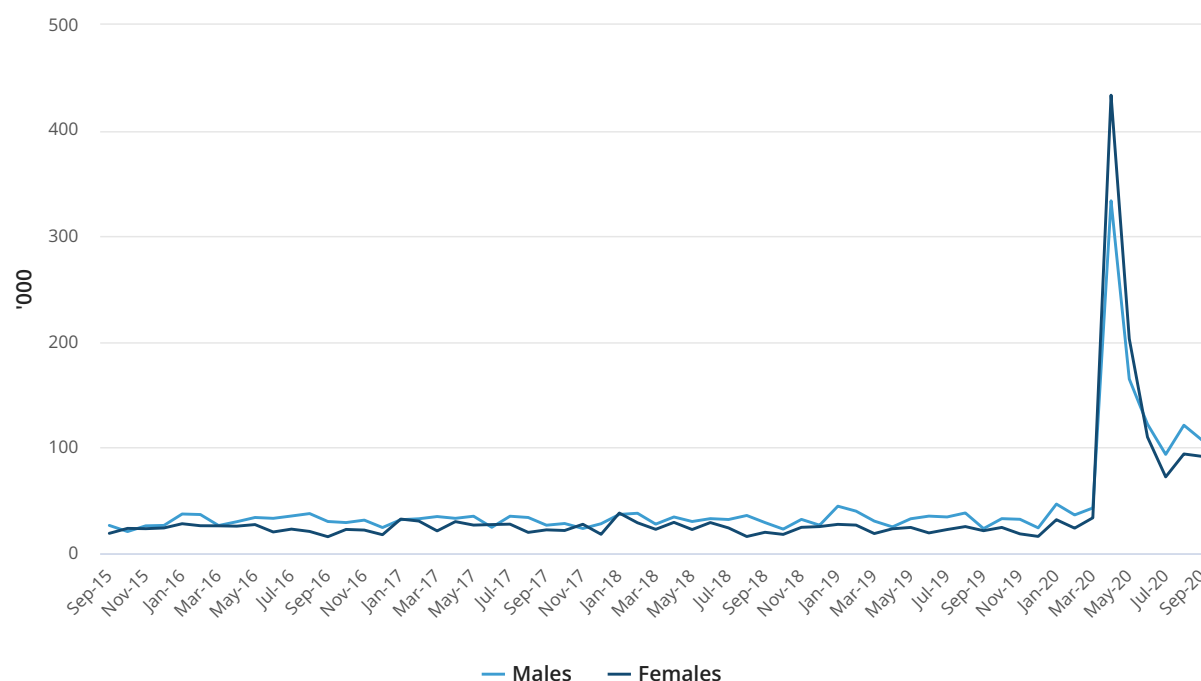
Of the 900,000 employed people who worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons in August:

- around 200,000 (or 22%) did not work at all; and
- around 700,000 worked some hours, but fewer hours than they usually work.

People working zero hours for economic reasons

Following an almost 700,000 increase between March and April, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons decreased by 600,000 between April and July (Chart 8). There was a 50,000 increase between July and August, followed by a small decrease in September.

Chart 8: Employed people working zero hours for economic reasons,



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2a

A further 90,000 employed people did not work at all as they began, left or lost a job. The majority of these people left or lost a job. Almost 70% of the people who left or lost a job were in Victoria.

Table 2 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons in each state or territory. All states and territories recorded very large increases in people working zero hours for economic reasons between March and April, followed by a steady decrease to July. Since July, in all states and territories except Victoria, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons has remained relatively steady or decreased slightly. In Victoria, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons almost doubled between July and August. Victoria accounted for almost 60% of people working zero hours for economic reasons in September.

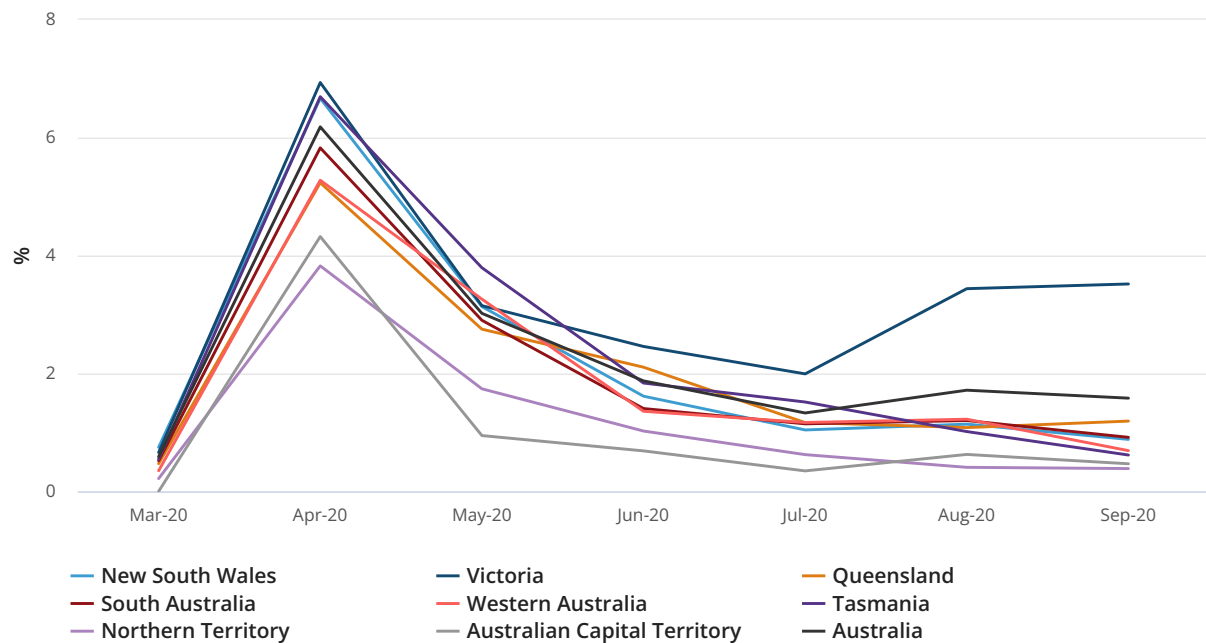
Table 2: People working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original

	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20
New South Wales	30.8	261.2	121.2	63.7	41.6	45.7	35.6
Victoria	22.7	229.8	102.8	80.7	65.6	111.5	112.9
Queensland	12.0	126.9	64.9	51.0	28.4	26.9	30.0
South Australia	4.5	48.0	23.5	11.6	9.5	10.0	7.7
Western Australia	4.8	69.2	42.0	17.7	15.4	16.5	9.3
Tasmania	1.4	16.8	9.1	4.5	3.8	2.6	1.5
Northern Territory	0.3	5.1	2.3	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.5
Australian Capital Territory	0.0	10.0	2.2	1.6	0.8	1.5	1.1
Australia	76.5	766.9	367.9	232.2	165.9	215.2	198.7

Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b

Chart 9 shows the proportion of employed people in each state and territory who worked zero hours for economic reasons.

Chart 9: Proportion of employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Data Cube EM2b and Labour Force, Australia Table 12

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(<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>).